

MINUTES
Virginia Board of Education
Standing Committee on the Standards of Quality (SOQ)
April 25, 2012
11:30 a.m.
Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building

Welcome and Opening Comments

Dr. Billy Cannaday, Chair, called the meeting to order with the following Board members present: Mr. Foster, Mrs. Atkinson, Ms. Mack, Mr. Krupicka, and Mr. Braunlich. Dr. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present.

Dr. Cannaday explained that the purpose of the meeting was to begin the biennial review of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) as required by the *Code of Virginia*. He then turned the meeting over to Mrs. Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for policy and communications, for a review of the major provisions of the SOQ, guiding questions and a proposed work plan.

Review of the Major Provisions of the SOQ

Mrs. Wescott began by explaining the Constitutional and statutory authority for the SOQ. A corresponding [presentation](#) was provided.

Mrs. Wescott covered the provisions that exist in Article VIII, §§ 1 and 2 of the *Constitution of Virginia* and discussed the provisions in the *Code of Virginia*, §§ [22.1-18](#) and [22.-18.01](#).

In her presentation, Mrs. Wescott also identified some of the major stakeholders in the review of the SOQ, which include:

- Governor
- Board of Education
- Local School Boards
- Parents
- Education Organizations
- General Assembly
- Superintendent of Public Instruction and Department Staff
- Students
- Public

Mrs. Wescott reviewed the nine Standards of Quality in the *Code of Virginia* and also made reference to legislation that passed the 2012 General Assembly to amend the SOQ, effective on July 1, 2012.

Discussion of the Questions Guiding Review of the SOQ

Mrs. Wescott reviewed a [list of questions](#) intended to help the Board determine proposed changes to the SOQ. It was suggested that, when providing the questions for comment, each standard should be listed, along with appropriate documentation to help the public understand the SOQ. Additionally, commenters should be asked to align their comments with the applicable standard in the SOQ.

The questions discussed included:

1. What provisions in the SOQ are not aligned with the direction that public education in Virginia is going in the next biennium?

There was a comment regarding how the direction of public education would be determined and whether this is captured in the Board's comprehensive plan and in the Board's Standards of Accreditation. A suggestion was made to add a phrase such as "consistent with the annual plan" to this question. There was also a suggestion to address the Board's expectations for student achievement in this question.

2. What are school divisions held accountable for that are not included in the SOQ?

There was a comment regarding whether current accountability is adequate and what tools exist to reward schools and to ensure that there are consequences in regards to low-performing schools. There was also a suggestion to examine the areas where school divisions have accountability that is not directly related to student achievement.

3. Are there provisions in the SOQ that are no longer relevant?

No comments specific to this question were made.

4. In order to provide for flexibility, what priorities should be set for the reallocation of resources?

There was a comment regarding defining the term "priorities" and whether it means legislative priorities or the term is used more broadly. The response was that the term is broad but that there is an understanding that the General Assembly needs to be involved where there may be issues regarding new funding or the reallocation of existing funding. There was a recommendation that this issue be addressed in the question, particularly as it pertains to flexibility at the local level at a time of scarce resources. Mrs. Wescott commented that the Board has looked at flexibility options in prior years.

There was a comment that the Board needs to give school divisions more flexibility if the expectation is to improve student learning and have high proficiency standards.

There was also a comment about the need to examine the standards to understand the rationale for provisions that may not be directly related to student performance to identify these areas and determine if flexibility can be provided or if certain provisions in the standards need to remain in place.

There was a comment regarding adding information to this question specifically referencing the achievement gap, understaffing and the need to target programs of recruitment and retention of staff.

Discussion of the Work Plan for the Review of the SOQ

Mrs. Wescott explained the [proposed work plan](#). She stated that stakeholders would be asked for input on the guiding questions and on the draft work plan during a comment period from April 27 through May 17. Stakeholder comments on the questions and the work plan would be reviewed by the Board in May. Both the questions and the work plan would be finalized by the Board at that time.

In the proposed work plan, public comment would be held from May 23 through November 15. Stakeholders would be invited to the committee's meetings on June 27 and July 25 to present recommendations. Public comment would also be accepted. At the committee's September meeting, committee members would discuss the draft recommendations for changes to the SOQ and receive public comment. The draft recommendations would be considered by the Board for first review in September and public hearings would be held in October. The recommendations would be considered by the Board for final review and approval in November.

There was a question as to whether there was a system for soliciting public comment from stakeholders. Mrs. Wescott explained that there is a list of stakeholders along with a list of Board watchers, who would receive notification. Additionally, the solicitation of comments could be placed on the Department of Education's Web site and comments could be sent in to a separate mailbox. There was also a question regarding when information is sent to major organizations and that these organizations should be encouraged to send information on this process to their members and have them respond directly to the Department of Education, on behalf of the Board.

There was a question regarding what can be done so that groups focus on the specific questions and benefit from comments. There was a suggestion to have town meetings, conference calls and the like that would focus on specific areas of the SOQ.

There was also a recommendation that requests for comments be sent to city and county governments. In response, Mrs. Wescott indicated that organizations such as the Virginia Association of Counties and the Virginia Municipal League receive information on the SOQ review process. There was also a suggestion that a public summary of the comments be made available to help with the discussion and also to let the public know that their comments are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

There was a comment regarding the connection between the SOQ review and the biennial budget and the fact that the *Code of Virginia* calls for a review of the SOQ in even-numbered years but the re-benchmarking of the standards for the biennial budget takes place in the odd-numbered years. A comment was also made that the Board, because of this schedule, examines the SOQ every year and it may be appropriate to consider a legislative change so that the SOQ review by the Board could be concurrent with the re-benchmarking process. For the review taking place this year, it may be a two-stage process where both policy and funding issues are considered with the knowledge that funding issues may be deferred to the next biennial budget. The suggestion was made that the approach to the SOQ review this year may permit the Board to create advocacy for any legislative and/or funding recommendations.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.